

## Guide To Using The Marine Mammal Recording Forms

There are two forms to be completed: one contains basic information on where you looked for marine mammals and for how long you looked (>Location and Effort Data=), the other contains information on each sighting of marine mammals (>Record of Sightings=).

### Location and Effort Data

One line on the >Location and Effort Data= form should be filled in for every watch period, regardless of whether you actually saw any marine mammals or not. This form includes basic information e.g. date, observers name, location and weather. It is important to note the length of time during each watch that the sonar transmitter was operating. Wind direction should be given to the nearest compass point. Speed can be recorded as Beaufort, knots or m/s, but please make it clear which units you use. Visibility should be recorded as poor (ie less than 1km), moderate (1-5km) or good (greater than 5km).

### Record of sighting

The sighting form need only be filled out when you see marine mammals. Most of the requested details are self-explanatory, but notes on some items are given below for clarification.

*Position* This is the lat/long at time of sighting.

*Depth* This should be in metres.

*Species* Identify species as far as possible - if you cannot identify the actual species then put down what you can. For example, if you know it's a whale and not a dolphin, but you are not sure what type of whale, put down >whale=. Useful categories are >whale=, >large whale=, >medium whale=, >small whale=, >dolphin=, >patterned dolphin=, >seal= etc. It can also be useful to eliminate species you know it isn't eg >medium-sized whale but not killer whale=. An identification guide for cetaceans will be provided to help identification.

*Total number* If it is difficult to tell exactly how many animals are present then estimate minimum and maximum number eg 5-8.

*Number of adults/number of juveniles.* If it is difficult to tell how many of each age group there are this can be an estimate of the minimum eg at least 3 adults, at least 2 juveniles.

*Description* It is useful to include a description of the animal, even if you are certain which species it is. Try and describe the features you used to identify it eg >hourglass pattern on flanks=. If you are uncertain of the species then the more detail you give the better. Features to describe are suggested on the form. A rough sketch on the back of the form, may be useful (eg shape of fin, shape of

patterning).

*Photograph or video taken* This will help later identification

*Behaviour* If there is more than one sort of behaviour then record all behaviours seen.  
Examples of behaviour are:-

normal swimming  
fast swimming  
porpoising  
breaching (animal launches itself clear of the water)  
tail-slapping (animal slaps tail on water surface)  
sky-pointing ( animal vertical in water with head pointing towards the sky)  
feeding  
resting  
avoiding ship  
bow-riding  
plus any other behaviour you may see.

*Activity of ship* eg on-passage, deploying, towing etc

*Sonar operating* This is important information - even if you think it's obvious from the activity of the ship, please fill in whether the sonar is transmitting or not when the animal(s) are seen.

*Closest Distance* This should be filled in whether or not the sonar is operating when the animal(s) seen. If no array is deployed then use distance from ship instead.

## **Organising watches**

Watches can take two forms. Ah-hoc watches are those where animals are sighted in an unplanned way eg observed by the bridge watch or a scientist wandering on deck. Formal watches are those in which a person is detailed to stand watch especially for marine mammals. Formal watches should be recorded using the sighting effort form and any sightings recorded using the sighting form. Animals sighted on an ad-hoc basis should be recorded using the sighting form only.

Formal watches should be kept as often as possible, but it is better to make the effort for a short a number of set periods each day than to watch for long or interrupted periods.

Queries regarding the use of the forms should be addressed to E. Harland, DERA, Winfrith. Completed forms should be returned to the Trial Leader on your ship.